

XXXIII.—*Letters, Extracts, and Notes.*

WE have received the following letter addressed "To the Editors of 'The Ibis'":—

SIRS,—With reference to Mr. D. A. Bannerman's notes on *Pytelia nitidula* ('Ibis,' 1910, p. 681), it may interest him, and other readers of the Journal, to know that there is a pair of that species in this Museum, obtained recently by Mr. H. M. Millar on the outskirts of the town. They are well mounted and in good plumage.

On comparing them with the plate and descriptions given by Mr. Bannerman based upon British East African examples, they appear to differ in the following respects:—

*Male.* The chest is olive-green, only a little lighter than the back, and without the wash of scarlet, or orange as it appears in the figure. The upper tail-coverts are of a more golden olive than the back, but they are not cinnamon-brown as depicted in the plate. Dimensions:—Total length 4 inches, wing 2, tail 1·4, tarsus ·6.

*Female.* The chest is pale olive-green with a scarcely perceptible suffusion of buff, very different from that of the female as shown in the plate. Dimensions:—Total length 4 inches, wing 2, tail 1·2, tarsus ·6.

From these facts it would appear that the northern form of this bird can hardly be considered identical with *P. nitidula*, if Durban examples are taken as typical of the latter.

I am, Sirs, yours &c.,

E. C. CHUBB.

Durban Museum, Natal,  
22nd July, 1911.

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*Report on the British Museum, 1911.*—The usual "Return" to Parliament of the British Museum for 1910 states that the acquisition in the Class "Aves" in that year amounted to 9377 specimens. Of these the most noteworthy were as follows:—

Six Harlequin Ducks (*Cosmonetta histrionica*) in eclipse plumage: 16 birds from Co. Sligo, Ireland, including the

type of the newly-described Irish Coal Tit (*Parus hibernicus*), presented by Mr. Collingwood Ingram: the first British-killed specimen of the Carolina Crake (*Porzana carolina*), presented by Mr. H. S. W. Eyre: 676 birds from South China, received in exchange from Lt.-Commander R. E. Vaughan, R.N.: 108 birds from South China, presented by Staff-Surgeon C. E. C. Stanford, R.N.: 166 birds from Formosa, presented by Mr. A. E. Wileman: 4 birds from Formosa, including the type of a new species (*Nucifraga owstoni*), presented by Mr. Collingwood Ingram: 61 birds from the N.-W. Provinces of India, presented by Capt. C. H. T. Whitehead: 162 Kalij Pheasants from Burma, including examples of six species new to the Collection, and seven type-specimens (*Oates Collection*): 4 birds from Upper Burmah, including the types of three new subspecies, presented by Major H. H. Harington: 141 birds from Annam, including the type of a new species of Pigeon (*Crocopus annamensis*), collected by Dr. J. J. Vassal: 115 birds from Borneo, presented by the British Ornithologists' Union: 4 birds, including two specimens of a Chaffinch (*Fringilla polatzeki*) new to the Collection, from Grand Canary, presented by Mr. D. A. Bannerman: a Whale-headed Stork (*Baleniceps rex*) from the Bahr-el-Ghazal, presented by Lieut.-General Sir Francis Wingate, K.C.B.: 45 birds from Somaliland and South Abyssinia, presented by Dr. R. E. Drake-Brockman: 429 birds from British East Africa, collected by Mr. Robin Kemp, presented by Mr. C. D. Rudd: 219 birds from various localities in British East Africa, presented by Mr. S. L. Hinde: 283 birds from the Mabira Forest, British East Africa, presented by Mr. L. M. Seth-Smith: the type-specimens of *Stiphornis mabiræ*, *Aethya kikuyuensis*, and of five other species recently described, from British East Africa, presented by Mr. F. J. Jackson: 159 birds and 3 eggs from Lake Ngami, collected by Mr. R. B. Woosman and the Hon. Gerald Legge, presented by the subscribers to the Lake Ngami Expedition Fund: 1346 birds, nests, and eggs from Angola, Portuguese Guinea, and the Cape Verde Islands, including an example of one

species (*Dryoscopus turati*), new to the collection, and the type of a new species of Weaver-bird (*Ortygospiza ansorgei*), obtained by Dr. W. J. Ansorge: 29 birds from Nigeria, presented by Mr. P. A. Talbot: a Darwin's Rhea (*Rhea darwini*) from the Woburn Aviaries, presented by His Grace the Duke of Bedford, K.G.: 150 birds collected in Guatemala by Mr. G. C. Shortridge, presented by the Zoological Society of London: 95 birds collected on the Rio Paraguay, presented by Mr. Geoffrey W. Tudor: 647 birds, 602 eggs, and 40 nests from Buenos Aires, collected by Mr. C. H. B. Grant, presented by Mr. Ernest Gibson: 161 birds from the Owen-Stanley Mountains, New Guinea, presented by Mr. E. J. Brook: 402 birds and 29 eggs from Aru, Kei, Ceram, and Amboina, presented by the British Ornithologists' Union: 153 birds from Australia, presented by Miss Audrey Chirnside.

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*The American Pheasant-Expedition.*—In our last number (above, p. 578) we gave some particulars concerning the expedition in search of Pheasants of all sorts and descriptions, led by Mr. C. W. Beebe, Curator of Birds in the Zoological Park, which left New York in December 1909. The last number of the Zoological Society's Bulletin (July, 1911) announces the return of the party to New York in May last "after completing the circle of the globe," and gives an interesting account of the journey, well illustrated by photographs.

The expedition proceeded first to Ceylon, where six weeks were spent in studying *Pavo*, *Gallus*, and *Galloperdix*, and thence to Calcutta, where they were cordially received by Dr. Annandale, and examined the splendid collection of Phasianidæ in the Indian Museum. Thence it was not a far journey to Darjeeling, where they were lodged in a Dāk Bungalow on the Nepal-Sikkim frontier, and met with *Gennæus*, *Tragopan*, *Lophophorus* and other well-known forms of the Eastern Himalayas. Returning to Calcutta, the party proceeded to the Western Himalayas, visiting Gurwhal and Cashmere, and on their way back to Calcutta

passed a short time in the plains, where Pea-fowl and Jungle-fowl were met with. From Calcutta they steamed 1700 miles south to Singapore, and established a second base in that famous emporium, whence they made excursions to Borneo, Sumatra, Java, and the Malay States. Thus they obtained information, and in many cases living specimens, of *Lophura*, *Acomus* and *Argus*, and, rarest of all, of the little-known wattled *Lobiophasis* of Borneo and even of the very rare *Rheinardtius*. In Burmah they penetrated 700 miles north, nearly up to the Chinese borders, and found some of the most interesting specimens of the entire trip.

Returning to Singapore the travellers took ship for a new sphere of action in China, where, after much toil and trouble, Eared-Pheasants (*Crossoptilon*) besides several species of true Pheasants (*Phasianus*) were obtained. The last field of work was Japan, where the birds were comparatively accessible.

The expedition reached New York on their return home on May 27th, 1911, after travelling fifty-two thousand miles, and spending seventeen months in their search for Pheasants, in which, we must all allow, they were wonderfully successful. Besides masses of notes and photographs, several hundred skins of the more interesting birds were brought home.

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*The Report of the National Museum, U.S.A., for 1910.*—The principal accessions of birds in 1909–10 were from East Africa and Java. Next in importance was a collection from Polynesia made by Dr. C. H. Townsend during one of the early Pacific cruises of the steamer 'Albatross,' of which he was then the naturalist. It comprises 391 specimens and examples of about 85 species, many of which are new to the Museum or were previously represented only by old and faded specimens. The types of three species of Swiftlets (*Collocalia*) are included, and there is a good specimen of the rare Sandpiper, *Æchmorhynchus cancellatus*, which had been reported as extinct. Thirty-nine birds and one nest from East Borneo and the islands of the Java Sea, included a Pheasant,

*Polyplectron schleiermacheri*, new to the collection ; they were presented by Dr. W. L. Abbott. There were two contributions of birds from the island of Luzon, one of 64 specimens from Dr. H. C. Curl, United States Navy, the other of 33 skins and 2 eggs from Mr. D. B. Mackie, of the Bureau of Agriculture, Manila. Mr. Henry D. Baker, American Consul at Hobart, Tasmania, transmitted 24 Australian birds. Thirty-four Chinese birds, including a Pheasant, *Crossoptilon tibetanum*, were received in exchange from the Hon. J. E. Thayer. One hundred and six African birds, chiefly from Mount Ruwenzori, needed for comparison, were purchased.

The reserve collection of Birds was removed to the new building in August 1909. The eggs had been previously transferred, but were not permanently arranged until December of the same year. The overcrowding of the skins in the old building had been so great that it was found necessary to order immediately more than 70 additional cases to provide for a reasonable spreading of the collection, and soon after half as many more to accommodate the current accessions, including those from East Africa. Delays in securing all of the drawers and fittings for the new cases, however, prevented the completion of the arrangement of the specimens within the year.

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*Mr. E. C. Chubb.*—We learn from the Ninth Annual Report of the Rhodesian Museum, Bulawayo, that Mr. E. C. Chubb, F.Z.S., has resigned his position as Assistant Curator and Zoologist of that Museum in order to take up the Directorship of the Durban Museum, Natal. The thanks of the Committee of the Buluwayo Museum to Mr. Chubb for his efficient work, and their regret at his leaving had been recorded on the Minutes.

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*Mr. G. L. Bates.*—Mr. Bates, having paid a short visit to his friends in the United States this summer, has returned to his former residence at Bitye in the German Colony of Cameroon, and is continuing his collections in every branch

of Natural History. As will be seen by his excellent paper (above, p. 581) his observations are quite original and in many instances very remarkable, especially as regards the tongue-spots in young birds.

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*New Inquiry on the Migration of Birds.*—We learn from 'The Times' of September 4th that Prof. J. Arthur Thomson and Mr. A. Lansborough Thomson, secretary of the Natural History Department of Aberdeen University, have issued a circular drawing special attention to the work of the "Aberdeen University Bird-Migration Inquiry." The inquiry, as we know, aims at collecting more definite information on migration by the method of placing rings on the feet of a large number of birds, in the hope of hearing of the subsequent movements of some of them.

The rings are inscribed with the address "Aberdeen University," and a number (or number and letter combination) which is different in each case. The rings are to be placed on young birds found in the nest, or on any old ones that can be captured without injury. The rings, which are of aluminium and extremely light, do not inconvenience the birds in any way. The marking work is chiefly carried on in Scotland, notably in Aberdeenshire, but is not confined to that county. The inquiry has the support of Mr. J. A. Harvie-Brown, Mr. William Eagle Clarke, Mr. William Evans, and other Scottish ornithologists.